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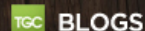
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Gospel-Centered for the Cause of Gospel Wakefulness

JARED C. WILSON



JARED C. WILSON | 9:45 AM CT

Shades Of Outrage

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What if you published a post that was for sexuality that serves and protects and against “rape fantasy” erotica/role-playing and lots of people found it horrifying and sickening?

This is what I’ve been trying to wrap my mind and heart around since posting [this excerpt from Douglas Wilson’s book *Fidelity*](#) last Friday. The comment thread exploded with horrified readers, some of them more nuanced in their outrage than others, but most claiming to find in the excerpt an admonition opposite of its meaning. Meaning, where I had read a treatise against self-gratification and the perversion of authority/submission into force and violence and kinky sex, others were reading it as a treatise *for* such things. Obviously I find that odd.

Now that some more high profile bloggers are squaring their sights on the post, sending more readers over to peruse it, I suppose a follow-up is in order. In the comment thread there, I explained and clarified umpteen times, and Douglas Wilson himself pitched in, but it appears to be to no avail. We cannot make people see what they are committed not to see. Indeed, I suspect much of the outrage was stewing toward Wilson and The Gospel Coalition already, and I just unwittingly provided the first opportunity to vent it.

If I could summarize the excerpt — as I have already — I would do it this way: The Bible lays out complementary roles for men and women in covenant contexts, in which men are meant to be the heads of the household and the church and women are meant to be their helpers. Because of the fall, this authority/submission design has become perverted. It has even become perverted in the arena of sexuality when authority/submission becomes about violent rape and even “rape fantasies” as found in role playing by kinky husbands and wives or in popular pornography for women.

That is why I was tying it into 50 Shades of Grey’s popularity. I thought it a deft point; perhaps what we see in this sort of BDSM fantasy garbage is a perverted overreaction to God’s good design of authority and submission.

That’s how I read the excerpt, and thanks to Douglas Wilson’s clarifications, I am content that I am reading it correctly. Here is what the excerpt is NOT saying: Forcing a woman against her will is okay. (Indeed, it’s saying the opposite.) Sex is just about a man’s “getting his.” Sex is about a man dominating (or otherwise taking advantage) of a woman.

Those things are not in the excerpt but have to be read into it against all context. I found many of the commenters’ ability to ignore the final paragraph of the piece, where Wilson says marital sexuality “serves and protects” and does not “devour,” quite telling.

The phrase that most critics seemed to hone in on was this one:

A man penetrates, conquers, colonizes, plants. A woman receives, surrenders, accepts.

Unable to connect these descriptions to “serve and protect” or the surrounding context against force/manipulation/kink, many decontextualized them and maintained it doesn’t matter what was meant, only what was said, and therefore what was thought to be said was assumed to be meant. Douglas Wilson attempted some clarification and re-assertion [in a comment](#):

“Penetrates.” Is anyone maintaining that this is not a feature of intercourse? “Plants.” Is the biblical concept of seed misogynistic? “Conquer.” Her neck is like the tower of David, and her necklace is like a


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thousand bucklers. “Colonize.” A garden locked is my sister, my bride.
C’mon, people, work with me here.

Only a person with a poetic ear like three feet of tin foil would maintain that penetrates can only be used of a Nazi invasion of Belgium, or that plants means that a man must treat his woman like dirt, or that conquering can only be done by ravaging Huns, and that colonization can only occur in a Haitian cane break.

What I was talking about occurs within the bounds of a man and a woman who love and respect one another, mirroring the relationship of Christ and the Church. Anyone who believes that my writing disrespects women either has not read enough of my writing on the subject to say anything whatever about it or, if they still have that view after reading enough pages, they really need to retake their ESL class. A third option — the one I think pertains here — they could surrender the a priori notion that I must be crammed into their mental caricature of a conservative complementarian.

Here’s a question for critics of the piece: You want these words *not* to mean a forceful, degrading domination of women, yes? And here is Wilson saying he does not mean them in that way. So why not accept that? Or, instead of insisting they mean the opposite of what he says he meant by them, why not just call him a liar? That’s a quicker line to draw.

In the final analysis, I come back to my original analysis, which is that Douglas Wilson’s view of women is that they are to be cherished and protected and served humbly by men, even men in authority over them. This is the kind of authority the Bible prescribes, the kind that edifies and helps wives to flourish, not wither. That is my view of complementarian relationships in the home and the church, as well. I am a proponent of marriages that mutually edify, marital sex that is mutually submissive, and Christian relationships in general that “serve and protect” rather than “devour.” If someone keeps finding that sickening, horrifying, deplorable . . . well, I’ll just keep finding that bewildering.

I appreciated this [comment from Bekah M](#) and I’ll give her the last word on my site:

This entire conversation exposes what has become a serious issue for a vast majority of our society; there is a general inability/unwillingness to read beyond the most popular and/or polarizing definition of a word. Readers tend to be lazy; we want things spelled out for us so that little critical thinking is required.

I would hope that your explanation of your choice of words would clarify enough to avoid Christians drawing sides and declaring war over a post with which we all claim to agree. From my understanding, all Jared was observing is that “50 Shades of Grey” is a prime example of how godly sexuality is twisted into dominance and aggression and that your observation in “Fidelity” is that rape (like all sin) is a twisting of God’s design.

Praying people will ask for an explanation and clarification as opposed to offering an attack based on the assumption that we’re all working with the same definitions and connotations. Your words are challenging and controversial to be sure, but the reaction to them here is surprising to me.

It was surprising to me too.

No doubt there are more comments to be made. The comments on this post are closed, but my email inbox is open. Feel free to send your continued thoughts and concerns to jared@gospeldrivenchurch.com. I will be grateful for the sharpening.



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